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at a loss. On the appointed evening my wife, whose imagination is singularly active, and will sometimes in consequence have her timidity very ludicrously excited, proposed to me, that I should accompany them to the theatre; I saw her drift, and that she did not feel perfectly easy on the score of this party. I smiled, and told her, I was resolved to find out what it was. On entering the room, I found several individuals, distinguished for their pursuit of science and literature. The materials were good, but it went off heavily, and I found myself obliged to be on my guard against yawning. At supper I engaged in conversation with a gentleman along side of me. Thirty years ago, I went, in regular course, through the mathematicks, metaphysicks and the Classics; and obtained the usual literary degrees. I have, however, no pretensions to learning, and have, for many years, attended more to its results, than its forms. Having made some remark to my neighbour, who, though a metaphysician, was a very pleasant man; he began in the Socratic form, and having had the simplicity to answer his questions, I found, before I was aware of it, that he had treacherously caught me in a net, where I was too much enthralled to extricate myself. In this situation, a strange pedant, opposite, pelted me with a shower of hard words, every one of which left a contusion. I made my escape as soon as I could, and on getting home, the moment I entered the room, my daughter sprang to meet me, "well, dear Father, what kind of a party was it?" My wife bid her not be so impatient, and, in the same breath, said, "come, what was this party?"—I told my child to get the dictionary. "The Dictionary! well we never thought of that, but I don't believe there is any such word in the *English Dictionary*."—She read me the explanation, "*Symposiack, relating to merry naking*!"—I told them the story, and resolved never to go to another.

FOR THE NORTH-AMERICAN JOURNAL.

The Augustan Age of Italian Literature.

THE unsettled state of language, which succeeded the dissolution of the Roman empire, was probably one of the

primary causes of the darkness, which hung over the world for eight centuries afterwards. The Greek lived no longer in its original majesty and elegance, except in the numbers of its poets, the pages of its historians and philosophers, and the eloquent remains of its orators. The Latin, which had been long on the decline, became corrupted by the barbarous jargon of the Goths and Vandals. Its sonorous periods became broken and rough, by the introduction of harsh epithets and foreign words. It was, however, too firmly established, and on principles too philosophical, to admit sudden change or derangement. But the languages of the Franks, the Vandals, the Lombards, and some others, were rude and unsettled, and ready to be moulded into any form, which chance, or the genius of the people, might direct. Time only could produce a permanent change, and many centuries elapsed, before the languages of Europe, which sprung from the Latin, or which were finally settled on the basis of this language, assumed the characteristic features by which they have since been distinguished.

We are not to suppose, that men were born, during this period, with intellects more blunted, or faculties less perfect, than at any other time before or since. Was there, in reality, a gradual decline in the intellectual system and natural powers of man? If this were a fact, how shall we account for the resuscitation, which finally ensued? We shall find no obvious cause of this resuscitation, originating in any events, or circumstances, not intimately connected with the internal relations of the people, among whom the revival of letters first discovered itself. There is good reason for believing, that the dark ages were not without men, who thought as profoundly and clearly as many others, who, in more enlightened times, have been ranked among the learned, wise, and great; but that the imperfect state of their language afforded them no adequate means of expressing their thoughts, or transmitting the results of them to posterity. The Latin could not have answered this purpose, as it was known only as a dead language, and as such very imperfectly; for a people, who had no fixed principles of language among themselves, who knew nothing of grammars and dictionaries, could not be supposed to make much proficiency in the critical study of a dead language. Moreover, the Arabs in Spain, and, in fact, in almost every

part of their territories from Cordova to Samarcand, cultivated letters during this time more successfully, perhaps, than at any other. Rhazes, Avicenna, and Averroes are still authors of estimation. But the Arabick had long been a regular and established language, perfected by the practice of ages, and, at that time, a more expressive and polished medium of communication, than any other living language. The minstrels of Scotland, and the bards of Scandinavia, exhibited in their songs some of the finest specimens of poetry during the dark ages; but these were in the language of their country, which had become fixed by long usage, and sufficiently copious and expressive for their purpose. If we examine still further, we shall find, that a similar remark will apply in all cases where any thing like learning or mental exertion appeared in those times. If there were a few, who resolved to be scholars, and attempted to write Latin, the piteous evidences of such attempts, which still remain, show us the folly of their resolution, and that they were struggling against a tide, which they had not power to resist.

With this view of the subject, we may easily discover how it happened, that Italy, in preference to any other country, was the seat of the first revival of literature. The Italian language was the eldest daughter of the Latin. It was the first, which sprung up out of the ruins of the parent stock, and the first, which came to a maturity sufficient for the purposes of use and ornament. No sooner was a language found to have attained such a degree of perfection, as to comprise all the varieties of inflection and copiousness of terms requisite in describing the passions and feelings, as well as natural objects, than the genius of poetry, roused from her slumbers, burst forth in a strain as eloquent and impassioned as in the happiest days of her triumph in ancient Rome. It has often been remarked, that the first compositions, in all languages, are usually in poetry. Linus, Orpheus, and Homer, wrote long before there was a prose composition in Greece. The Scandinavians, on the shores of the Baltick, had their Rhunick verses at a very early period; and the ignorant and stupid Carribians composed songs in praise of their heroes. So it was in Italy, Dante was the first, who wrote the new language with elegance, and showed, that it was capable of expressing all the beau-

ties of poetry in a pure, animated, and comprehensive style. His poems discover a wonderful scope of invention and exuberance of imagination, and are no less remarkable for dignity and grace, than for keenness and delicacy of satire. Petrarch took up the harp, which Dante had left behind him, and swept its chords with a gentler hand ; but although its tones were more soft and harmonious than before, the fire of musick and the magick of poetry still breathed from every string. What he wanted in dignity and strength, was more than compensated by the elegance and exquisite sweetness of his numbers. His songs and sonnets are esteemed the most finished specimens of composition in the Italian language. Petrarch was not a poet only, he was a great scholar in every branch of literature, and wrote, in Latin, several treatises on subjects of religion, morals, law, government, besides orations and letters. Boccaccio was the pupil of Petrarch, and, as an elegant and accomplished scholar, was scarcely inferiour to him. His poetry is distinguished for sweetness and simplicity, and his prose compositions are reckoned models of classical purity of style and diction.

But the age of Leo X, has been emphatically called the Augustan age of Italian literature. The sun, which rose with Dante, had now come to its meridian. The universities, which had long been tenanted by morose and superstitious asceticks, began to be regulated on more liberal and rational principles. The barrier of the absurd jargon of Aristotelian dialecticks, which had effectually kept out all improvements and innovations, began to decay. The redoubtable combatants in controversy laid aside, by degrees, the tremendous panoply of syllogisms, substantial forms, and the ten categories, by which they had rendered themselves so formidable. Literature, in these times, was a species of military tacticks, in which he who could hurl the darts of controversy with the greatest dexterity, and pour in upon his antagonist the most powerful volley of syllogisms, was sure to be crowned with the triumph of conquest, and to inherit the rightful claims of being thought the greater scholar and the wiser man. But the close of the fifteenth century, and the commencement of the sixteenth, was the dawn of a brighter day : it was a fortunate period for literature and the interests of man. A great num-

ber of historians and philosophers, as well as poets, distinguished for their talents, thirst for knowledge and improvement, appeared at the same time in Italy ; and under the encouragement and fostering protection of Leo X, they produced a revolution in the empire of literature, science and the arts, unparalleled in its extent, and the rapidity of its operations.

The same spirit was soon communicated to the universities, and professors of talents and intelligence were appointed to fill the chairs. The Latin and Greek classicks, which, the latter especially, had been sleeping for ages in quiet repose, were drawn from their envelopes of dust, and called into use.* The sciences were studied, and the arts flourished. Italy was divided into a number of small independent states, each of which had its university. A laudable and active spirit of emulation was excited among them, which proved exceedingly beneficial to the interests of learning in general, as well as in raising the reputation and promoting the usefulness of individual universities.

In the mean time the pope was holding out every inducement to men of letters, by encouragements, rewards, and special patronage : he sought for merit every where, and when found, never suffered it to pass without reward. Amidst all his bigotry and illiberality of feeling, of which he had a sufficient share, to say nothing of any other traits of his character, which the history of the reformation discloses, he must certainly be considered a most active and zealous promoter of learning, and one of the principal agents in bringing about its revival. It is a little remarkable, that this boasted protector of the arts, literature, and the sciences, and also the head of the christian church, should have issued restrictions against publishing or printing any translations from the Greek, Hebrew, or Arabick, including, therein, the translations of the scriptures, in which dress

* To show the very low state of Greek literature, at the beginning of the period above-mentioned, we need adduce one fact only. Pomponazzo, one of the greatest and most celebrated scholars of his time, and professor of philosophy at Padua, understood nothing of Greek, although he lectured and wrote on the doctrines of Aristotle and Plato. Leo X, vol. iv. p. 126.

only they could be generally understood.* When he fulminated the famous bull against Luther, and the reformers, in addition to the most terrible anathemas, he prohibited all men, indiscriminately, from reading any one of their books.† This does not look much like promoting learning; but even this was mild and forbearing, in comparison with what preceded and followed. Father Paul, in his admirable history of the council of Trent, speaking of events which took place thirty years afterwards, says, that “the Romish inquisitors prohibited, in the mass, all books printed by sixty-two printers, which they denounced, without any regard to the contents, adding, further, a general prohibition to read any books issuing from the press of a printer, who had but once in his life printed any thing produced by an heretic.” But, after all, the prohibitory decrees of Leo X, may have been productive of some good effects, as well as many bad ones. They effectually closed every avenue of knowledge, both of the scriptures and the authors of antiquity, to the common people; but this induced scholars to study those books in the original with more care, and to become more learned. They made criticks, rather than pretenders; and at that period certainly, there were many more reasons than at present, for considering a few learned criticks preferable to a partially enlightened community.

The progress of literature may be ranked among the principal causes of the reformation; and, in its turn, the reformation operated as a powerful incitement to inquiry and critical study. It brought forward new objects of taste, and presented new motives to classical research. Luther, Melancthon, and some others of the reformers, were learned men, and the revolution they were effecting, produced an universal excitement, not only among their friends and supporters, but among their enemies and antagonists. They found, on both sides, that a critical knowledge of ancient authors gave a powerful weight to their arguments and opinions, and additional credit to their cause. A taste

* Villers' Prize Essay, p. 290.

† This was the celebrated bull, which begun, *Exsurge, Deus, judica causam tuam*, and to the year of its date, 1520, may be referred the origin of the reformation, for it was not till this time, that the breach had become so wide, that no hope remained of its ever being closed.

for the charms of style and beauties of composition in the writers of antiquity, was thus, by a kind of necessity, induced, and these writers were studied with ardour and very great success. Religious and political topics, of the greatest interest and importance, were then in agitation, which afforded ample scope for all the powers of eloquence, and the most brilliant efforts of genius. In short, it has been allowed, that this period, in point of classical learning, has no parallel in the annals of literary history. Lord Bacon attributes to the immediate effects of the reformation, "an admiration of ancient authors, the hate of the schoolmen, the exact study of languages, and the efficacy of preaching; which four causes produced an affectionate study of eloquence, and *copia* of speech, which then began to flourish."*

Italian literature seems not to have attracted the attention it deserves. The passion for French, which many causes have concurred in exciting and keeping alive, seems to have excluded Italian from the catalogue of acquirements necessary for an accomplished scholar. The few, whom inclination or accident has led to form an intimate acquaintance with the writers of Italy, have uniformly spoken of them in terms of admiration, and been struck with astonishment at the preference, which has been given by tacit consent, if not by direct avowal, to the French. It is generally allowed, by all adequate judges, that the language is vastly better adapted to every species of composition, than the French; that it has more dignity and strength, a greater felicity of expression, and infinitely more sweetness and harmony. It is simple in its structure, and principles of pronunciation, and is more easily acquired, probably, than any other language. Since the task is so easy, and the treasure to reward the student so rich and abundant, it is certainly a little remarkable, that the tide of fashionable study has not long ago turned into this direction.

On the publication of those elegant and popular works, the lives of Lorenzo de Medici, and his son, Leo X, a fund of interesting, new, and valuable information was communicated, on the subject of Italy, considered in its literary relations, of which there existed before only vague and un-

* Of the advancement of learning. B. I.

certain notions. We have, in them, a comprehensive and lucid view of the most enlightened period of Italian history. We are made acquainted with the characters and literary merits of the best authors of the times, and are told what they accomplished and how they are to be estimated. These histories comprise a space of about seventy years. They who appeared both before and after this period, and among whom were some of the best writers and greatest men, were not included. Among the former, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, may be ranked the first, and Tasso among the latter.

Criticks were very well agreed, before Addison's twelve critical numbers on *Paradise Lost*, in assigning the third palm of poetical merit to Tasso; and even since, some are found so far deviating from the character of good Englishmen, as to embrace the same heretical doctrines.* In the works of Ariosto and Tasso, together, they have discovered every imaginable excellence of which poetry is capable. They find in the former, clothed in the most enchanting dress, all that is wild and extravagant in Gothick fiction, combined with a rich variety of beauties drawn from every department of nature, from the storehouses of human knowledge, and a deep penetration into the character of man. In the latter, besides these qualities, they discover dignity, sublimity, pathos, originality of thought, unity of design, boldness of conception, accuracy of description, and whatever else is requisite for making a great epick poet after the most approved Aristotelian directions. Voltaire preferred, or affected to prefer, the *Orlando* to the *Odyssey*, and the *Jerusalem Delivered* to the *Iliad*.† Perhaps he did, but

* Blair says, "the *Jerusalem* is, in rank and dignity, the third regular epick poem in the world, and comes next to the *Iliad*, and *Æneid*."

† Russell's *Modern Europe*, vol. 2. p. 185.

Voltaire says, in his *Essay sur la Poesie Epique*, speaking of Tasso, "On ne fait nulle difficulté de la mettre à côté de Virgile et d'Homère malgré ses fautes, et malgré la critique de Despréaux." And afterwards; "Il a autant de feu qu'Homère dans ses batailles, avec plus de variété.—Il a peint ce qu'Homère crayonnait."

In the days of Boileau and Dacier, it was fashionable to criticise in a different manner; but the readers of the former, would have thanked him for some stronger reasons than he has given for the singularity of

it is presumed he had forgotten, that he had said so, when he afterwards wrote a poem of four stanzas, with a view to characterize the four greatest epick poets that ever lived. After honouring Homer and Virgil with a stanza each, he modestly ranges himself in the third place, and, with marvellous condescension, allows Milton to stand next below him in the quaternion. But in the fire of his poetical enthusiasm, himself the theme, he quite forgot Tasso, and did not even essay a single invocation to his very obliging muse in his favour.

Be the opinions of Voltaire and Despréaux what they may, the best judges have uniformly concurred in placing the great Italian poets in the very first rank. They have found among the historians of Italy, very exact and judicious imitators of the purest ancient models. They boldly compare Guicciardini and Machiavel to the two greatest Latin historians; in the former is the flowing fullness and graceful ease of Livy, in the latter, the sententious brevity and pithy style of Tacitus. To these may be added, cardinal Bembo, a man of great talents and universal learning; Giannone, who was candid, impartial, and perfectly acquainted with his subject; cardinal Pallavicini, who wrote the history of the council of Trent, in an eloquent and animated style: he wrote this in opposition to the admirable history of father Paul, and because he deviates from him in several particulars, he is sometimes thought partial. With these might be mentioned many others of distinguished merit and high reputation in the literary annals of their country.

The light of science began to emit a few feeble rays about the time of the revival of letters. The Greek books on the elements began then first to be studied, and some progress was made; but it was not till sometime after, that Copernicus revived, explained, and reestablished the ancient system of Py-

his opinion, and the severity of his criticism, in the following lines relating to Tasso.

“——— quoi que notre siècle à sa gloire publie,
Il n’ eût point de son livre illustré l’ Italie,
Si son sage héros, toujours en oraison,
N’ eût fait que mettre enfin Satan à la raison;
Et si Renaud, Argant, Tancrède, et sa maîtresse,
N’ eussent de son sujet égayé la tristesse.”

L’ Art Poétique, Chant Trois.

thagoras; that Gallileo confirmed the truth of this system by the improvement and use of the telescope, and by his discovery and elucidation of the principles of motion; and that he applied the results of mathematical reasoning to the demonstration of mechanical powers. And before these elementary discoveries, it would be idle to expect much advancement in physical science beyond the point, to which the acute and philosophical Greeks had already arrived. It hence appears why the sciences during this illustrious period made so trifling a figure, compared with poetry, and the other branches of general literature. Natural history and anatomy were still in their infancy; yet they engaged the attention of great men, and made no inconsiderable progress in the current of general improvement. It is almost superfluous to add, that this was a splendid era for the arts, particularly sculpture, painting and architecture.

The following is a translation of an extract from the Abbé Barthelemi. He was struck with so great admiration at the interesting events of the period of which we have been speaking, that, before he wrote the travels of Anacharsis, he was on the point of forming a similar design of illustrating this part of Italian history. This fragment is a curiosity: it not only combines, in a clear and distinct form, and within a very small compass, all the most remarkable points to be considered, but it shows in what manner a great mind forms its designs and commences their execution. The original may be found at the close of Eustace's Classical Tour.

"I was inspired by accident, with the first idea of the travels of Anacharsis. When I was in Italy, in 1755, I was much less attentive to the actual state of the cities, through which I passed, than to their ancient splendour. My thoughts naturally run back to those periods, when they disputed, among themselves, the glory of establishing the arts and sciences, and it occurred to me, that a narrative of travels undertaken in that country a little before the time of Leo X, and continued for a certain number of years, would present one of the most interesting and useful spectacles in the history of the human mind: this will appear from the following short sketch.

"A Frenchman should cross the Alps; at Pavia he should see Jerome Cardan, who wrote on almost every subject, and whose works are contained in ten folio volumes. He

should see Corregio at Parma, painting in fresco the dome of the cathedral;* at Mantua, the count Balthazar Castillon, author of an excellent work, entitled *The Courtesan*; at Verona, Fracastor, who was celebrated as a physician, philosopher, astronomer, mathematician, elegant scholar, and cosmographer, for the writers of those times sought to distinguish themselves by almost every species of composition, which will naturally happen in any country where letters begin to be cultivated. At Padua he should attend the lectures of Philip Decio, professor of jurisprudence, and celebrated for his great talents and learning. This city was, for a time, subject to the government of Venice. When Lewis XII, conquered the Milanese, and wished to adorn his capital by establishing Decio in it, he demanded him of the republick, but compliance was not readily granted. The parties became so warm, that they were on the point of engaging in a new war for the possession of this professor of law.

“ Our traveller should find at Venice Daniel Barbaro, who inherited from his ancestors a great name in the republick of letters, which he sustained with reputation by his commentaries on the rhetorick of Aristotle, a translation of Vitruvius, and a treatise on perspective. He should also see Paul Manutius, the printer, who cultivated letters with the same success as his father Aldus Manutius.† He should

* After Corregio had finished this inimitable painting, he was abusively treated by the Ecclesiasticks, who refused to allow him the stipulated reward. They paid him a paltry pittance in copper coin, the burden of which, during a walk of several miles to his family, fatigued him so much, that his death was soon after the consequence. When Titian was afterwards passing through Parma, the ignorant priests were about to deface this painting, and it was only by his earnest entreaties, that they were prevented. He is said to have told them, that “ were he not Titian, he would wish to be Corregio.”

† The world has been indebted to few individuals for the revival of letters, more than to Aldus Manutius. Printed books were exceedingly scarce, and such as were to be had badly executed. He established printing presses at Venice 1494, and engaged with unbounded ardour and zeal in publishing the most rare and valuable works, particularly Greek, few of which had been printed. To render his editions as perfect as possible, he invited learned men from various parts to reside in Venice, and to induce them to accept his invitation, he instituted an academy there, which soon rose to celebrity. He published a great number of books, and for a long time the Aldine press was as well

find with Paul, all the editions of the ancient Greek and Latin authors, which had lately issued from the most famous presses in Italy; and amongst others, that of Cicero in four volumes folio, published at Milan in 1499; and a Psalter in four languages, Hebrew, Greek, Chaldee, and Arabick, printed at Genoa in 1516.

“At Ferrara he should see Ariosto; at Bologna, six hundred students attending the lectures of professor Ricini, on jurisprudence, and among the number, Alciat, who soon after drew together eight hundred students, and eclipsed the glory of Bartolo and Accurse; at Florence, Machiavel, the historians Guicciardini and Paulus Jovius, a flourishing university and the family of Medici, which had formerly been devoted to commercial pursuits, but was then at the head of government, and allied to many noble families. This family at one time displayed many great virtues, and at another, as many vices; but it was always distinguished for the interest it took in the cause of literature and the arts. At Sienna the traveller should be introduced to Mathiole engaged in his commentary on Dioscorides; at Rome, to Michael Angelo raising the cupola of St. Peters; Raphael painting the galleries of the Vatican; Sadolet and Bembo, afterwards cardinals, but at that time filling the office of secretaries to Leo X; Trissino bringing forward the representation of Sophonisba, the first tragedy composed in modern times;* Beroald, librarian of the Vatican, engaged in publishing the annals of Tacitus, which had been lately discovered in Westphalia, and which Leo X had purchased at the price of five hundred gold ducats.† He should

known to the learned as the authors they studied. Aldus Manutius invented the *Italic* character.

* This was not only the first tragedy written in modern times, but it was the first specimen of composition written in the *versi sciolti*, or Italian blank verse. Trissino was the inventor of this species of writing among the Italians. He published, also, among other things, *Italia liberata da' Goti*, an epick poem in twenty seven books, of which Voltaire says, “son plan est régulier mais la poesie y est faible.”

Essay sur la Poes. Ep. chap. 5.

† Before this time the five first books of the history, and the six last books of the annals only, had been printed, and these with many errors. The first five books of the annals had existed only in manuscript in the abbey of Corvey, in Westphalia, till they were bought by Leo X. He entrusted the correction and printing of this manuscript.

see this same Pope offering places of distinction, to learned men of all nations, who would come and reside in his dominions, and large rewards to such, as would bring him any newly discovered manuscripts.

“At Naples, he should find Talesio, endeavouring to re-establish the system of Parmenides, and who, according to Bacon, was the first restorer of philosophy.* He should find, also, Jordan Bruno, whom nature seems to have intended for her interpreter, but to whom, in giving him an uncommon genius, she refused the talent of governing himself.

“Thus far our traveller has been confined to a rapid tour through Italy, from one extremity to the other, meeting perpetually with prodigies, with wonderful monuments, and great men, and seized at every step with increasing admiration. Similar objects would every where strike his attention, as he should pursue his travels in other directions. What a harvest of discoveries and what a source of reflections on the origin of those luminaries, which have enlightened Europe ! But I content myself with having hinted at these inquiries ; in the mean time my subject demands some further developments.

“During the fifth and sixth centuries, Italy was subject to the Goths, Ostrogoths, and other nations, till that time unknown. In the fifteenth century, under more favourable auspices, it was distinguished for men of genius and talents. They were called into the country, or at least received there by the families of Medici, Este, Urbino, Gonzaga, by many sovereigns of less consideration, and by the different republicks. Great men were to be met with every

together with those parts, which had already been printed, to Beroald, and as a reward for his service, secured to him by a decree, the exclusive profits of all the copies, which should be printed any where for ten years afterwards.

* Parmenides was the first who advanced the opinion, that the earth is round, and placed in the centre of the universe. Pythagoras improved on this hint of Parmenides, and gave the earth a rotation on its axis, and seemed to have some accurate notions of the solar system. Calcagnini, a learned Italian, in the time of Leo X, is said to have discovered in his writings, a knowledge of the true system of the world, before the discoveries and explanations of Copernicus were published.

where ; some born in the country, and others attracted from abroad, less by motives of interest, than of the flattering distinctions that were offered them. Some were engaged, in the neighbouring nations, in diffusing the light of knowledge, in watching over the education of youth, and publick safety.

“ Universities and Colleges were established in various places ; also, printing presses, from which were sent forth books in almost every language ; great numbers of libraries, which were enriched, not only by printed books, but by valuable manuscripts, lately discovered and brought from those countries, where ignorance still held her empire.— Academies were multiplied so much, that at Ferrara were ten or twelve, at Bologna about fourteen, and at Sienna sixteen. They had for their object, the sciences, belles lettres, languages, history and the arts. In two of the academies, one of which was devoted to Plato, the other to Aristotle, were discussed the opinions of the ancient philosophers. One of the societies at Bologna and at Venice, was engaged in superintending the printing presses, inspecting the paper, types, proof sheets, and every thing else, which would contribute to give perfection to the new editions.

“ Italy was the country where letters had made, and were still making, prodigious progress. This progress was the result of two causes ; the emulation of the different governments into which the country was divided, and the nature of the climate. In the principal cities of each state, and even those of less consideration, there was an excessive eagerness for learning and glory. In almost all of them were astronomical observatories, anatomical theatres, botanick gardens, extensive libraries, collections of medals and monuments of antiquity ; and the highest marks of distinction, gratitude and respect, were shown to men of letters, in every department of literature and science.

“ As to the climate, it was not rare to find, in that country, imaginations active and fruitful, minds capable of just and profound views, of conceiving the grandest enterprises, and of deep and patient meditation, on the means of putting them in execution, and incapable of abandoning such enterprises, after they had been once conceived and adopted. It was to those advantages, and those peculiarities, that

Italy was indebted for that immense mass of learning and talents, which in a few years elevated her above every other country of Europe.

“I would place Ariosto under the pontificate of Leo X, and among the coteremporaries of this poet, I would speak of Petrarch and Tasso; although the former lived about one hundred and fifty years before, and the latter was born eleven years after the death of Ariosto. I would speak of Ariosto in this connexion, because, it was not till the time of Leo X, that his Italian poetry began to be properly estimated, and to be frequently printed, with notes and illustrations; and of Tasso, because his poetry was formed, in a great measure, on the model of Ariosto. This would be the same thing, as giving the name of Nile, both to the sources and outlets of that river. Every species of poetry was then cultivated, and with such success as to become models to succeeding writers. Besides Ariosto, one might mention, in Italian poetry, Bernard Tasso, the father of Torquato, Hercules Bentivoglio, Annibal Caro, Berni; and in Latin poetry, Sannazarius, Politian, Vida, Be-roald; and among those who were not decidedly poets, but who occasionally wrote poetry, Leo X, Machiavel, Michael Angelo, Benvenuto Cellini, which last excelled, also, in sculpture and engraving.

“The progress of architecture, during this period, is sufficiently attested, on the one hand, by the works of Serlio, of Vignole, and Palladio, as well as by the multiplicity of commentaries on the treatise of Vitruvius; and on the other hand, by the publick and private edifices, which were built at that time, and which still remain.

“In regard to painting, I have already made mention of Michael Angelo, Raphael, Corregio, and there remain to be added, Julio Romano, Titian, André del Sarte, and many others, who were formed either from their lessons or their works.

“New writings daily made their appearance, on the systems of Plato, Aristotle, and the other ancient philosophers. A few unwearied criticks, such as Giraldu, Panvinus, Sigonius, laboured on the antiquities of Rome, and almost every town collected its annals. Whilst some writers were employed in extending the knowledge of the history of man, and others in exploring the neglected regions of antiquity.

men of enterprise and intrepidity, were exposing themselves to the greatest dangers, in penetrating countries and discovering nations before unknown; and even whose existence no one had ever suspected. The names of Christopher Columbus, of Genoa; of Americus Vespucius, of Florence; and Sebastian Cabot, of Venice; adorn the last page of the catalogue, which is already swelled to a large size, by the names of other illustrious Italians. The narratives of these intrepid voyagers were published in the collection of their compatriot Ramusio.

“The capture of Constantinople, by the Turks, in 1453, and the liberality of Leo X, caused a great number of Greeks to take up their residence in Italy. They brought with them all their elementary books, relative to the mathematicks. A desire was excited to study the Greek language. These books were printed, translated, and explained, and a taste for geometry became general. Many devoted their whole attention to these pursuits, as Commandin and Tartaglia; others made them secondary to their more favourite studies, as Maurolico, of Messina, who published works on mathematicks, mechanicks, astronomy, opticks, musick, the history of Sicily, grammar, the lives of the Saints, Roman martyrology, not neglecting Italian poetry. Such, also, was Augustin Nefo, professor of philosophy at Rome, under Leo X, who wrote on astronomy, medicine, politicks, ethicks, rhetorick, and almost every other subject.

“Anatomy was improved by Fallopius of Modena, Aquapendente, his disciple, Bolognini of Padua, Vigo of Genoa, and others.

“Aldiovandi of Bologna, after having been professor of botany and philosophy, forty-eight years in the University of that city, left behind him a work on natural history, occupying seventeen folio volumes. Among the immense number of writings, which appeared during this period, I forbear to mention those on theology and jurisprudence, because they are known to those, who are devoted to these sciences, and for those who are not, they have little interest. As it respects the writers in other departments, I have selected, at hazard, a few only of the most remarkable. Those, whom I have mentioned, will suffice to show the different kinds of literature, which were then cultivat-

ed, and the various means, which were employed in multiplying and extending the sources of knowledge.

“The progress of the arts produced a taste for publick spectacles and magnificence. The study of history, and of Grecian and Roman antiquities, inspired the ideas of decorum, unity, and perfection, which had not until that time been revived. When Julian de Medici, brother of Leo X, was proclaimed a citizen of Rome, this proclamation was attended with publick festivities. A large theatre was erected in Rome, for the express purpose, on which was represented, during two days, one of the Comedies of Plautus. The musick and extraordinary preparations in particular, excited general admiration. The Pope, who thought it his duty, on this occasion, to convert into an act of beneficence, that which was, in reality, an act of justice, diminished some of the taxes; and the people, who took this act of justice for an act of beneficence, raised him a statue.

“An observer, who should see nature disclosing so many secrets, philosophy so many truths, and industry so many results; and, at the same time, a new world added to the old, would be almost led to suppose, that a new human race had sprung into being; but the surprise, excited by these marvellous realities, would be suddenly weakened, when he discovered merit struggling successfully against the dignity of titles, wise and learned men, clothed in the Roman purple, directing the councils of kings, and admitted to the most important and honourable places of government.

“To give a more attractive interest to these travels, I would, in addition to that emulation for glory, which every where displayed itself, enlarge on the new ideas, which this wonderful revolution elicited, on all the movements, which agitated the nations of Europe at that time, the recollections of ancient Rome, which would perpetually recur to the mind, and, in a word, on all the future events, which would be indicated by the present; for the age of Leo X, was the dawn of those periods, which followed, and many great men, who shone in the seventeenth and eighteenth, centuries in different nations, are indebted for the greatest part of their glory, to the writers, whom Italy produced during the two centuries immediately preceding.

The subject presented a field so rich, so varied and instructive, that I had a momentary ambition to pursue it; but I soon perceived it would require an entire change of my course of studies. It occurred to me, that a narrative of travels, undertaken a little before the time of Philip, the father of Alexander, would enable me to combine, within a small compass, those portions of Grecian history, which are the most interesting, and, at the same time, give me an opportunity of enlarging on the sciences, arts, religion, manners, customs, which do not regularly come under the jurisdiction of history. I seized this idea, and after reflecting a long time on the subject, commenced the execution on my return from Italy in 1757."

This sketch, as admirable for its conciseness as the variety and interest of the incidents it combines, comes down to the close of the sixteenth century, after which Italian literature began, in some measure, to decline; but not so much as has generally been imagined. The English and French at last, after their language became matured, caught the spirit of renovation, and advanced with such comparative rapidity, that they not only really left the Italians behind, but fancied they were falling back in proportion as themselves advanced before them. The truth is, an unbroken succession of great and learned men continued in Italy till very lately. Their pursuits have been in a different direction, in which the scope of talent has been somewhat more confined than formerly. The fountains of poetry, history, and the belles lettres were nearly exhausted, and it was natural, that others more abundant should be sought after. Men, independent and emulous of literary distinction, will not often tamely follow in the steps of others, unless they are animated by some flattering visions of hope, that they shall be able to surmount as formidable difficulties, and ascend as threatening heights, as others have already done. They prefer a track less frequented, although it promise less to the adventurer. Great minds, if they be ambitious withal, as every literary man, who aims at eminence, must be, will usually pursue the course, which appears most open and direct to distinction, honours, and the reward of merit and good purposes. Who would write a poem of the second or third order, when he could be the first mathematician, or astronomer, in his country?

or who would spend his time in writing a history of inferior merit, when he could make himself the first physician in the state?

The Italians, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, devoted themselves to the physical sciences, particularly to anatomy and the collateral branches of medicine, in preference to those branches of literature, which had been explored thoroughly by their predecessors.—Gallileo, Torricelli, Boscovich, Spallanzani, Galvani, Volta, are great names in the philosophical world, and reflect a lustre on their age and country. Boscovich was not only an original theorist and philosopher, but he was also a poet of eminence; Spallanzani unfolded a great many of the mysteries of nature; and Galvani detected, in a new form, one of her most powerful and universal agents.

In the mean time literature was by no means neglected. Metastasio is ranked among the first of poets, and Alfieri, Maffei, and some others, are allowed high claims. Strada's history is remarked for its elegance, correctness, and pure style. Muratori and Tiraboschi have written histories, which, in the judgment of a late learned and judicious author, are among the very first of their kind. Muratori was a historian, general scholar, and a poet. His works were published in forty-six volumes folio. Tiraboschi's history of Italian literature from the days of Augustus to the close of the eighteenth century, in thirteen volumes quarto, is considered a wonderful production. It embraces the whole compass of Italian literature, both ancient and modern. "The immortal work of Tiraboschi," says Mr. Roscoe, "is the noblest specimen of that species of composition, which any age or country has produced."

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THE reader, who has been accustomed to laugh at the *verses* of Sternhold and Hopkyns, will be amused, perhaps, in perusing the following account of them, extracted from Wood.

"Thomas Sternhold was, in all likelihood, born in Hampshire, but whether educated in Wykeham's school, near